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Cooperative Extension Service P.I. & S.U. THE VALUE OF A HOME VEGETABLE GARDEN  
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#### BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

A home garden 50 feet long and 30 feet wide, may produce vegetables during the summer and fall with a value of from \$200 to \$500. The exact value of an average garden is almost impossible to determine, but even a small plot may have a real impact in reducing the family food budget. The garden also provides pleasure as a hobby, and an opportunity for healthful recreational activity.

To be realistic in our evaluation, we must appreciate that an experienced gardener, with a fertile, well drained loam soil, and adequate rain during the summer, will reap bountiful harvests of delicious vegetables. On the other hand, an inexperienced gardener, with a poor soil, and a dry summer, may have very low yields, and almost no return for his investment of time and money.

#### Cost and Return

A home garden does cost money, and good yields are needed if it is to help reduce the food budget. Here are some typical cost figures which should be considered for a 1500 square foot garden.

It is rather futile to attempt to establish an accurate value for the vegetables which can be harvested from a home garden. With average soil and climatic conditions, a minimum of \$200 worth of vegetables can be expected. Under good soil and climatic conditions, and successive planting to provide continuous harvest during the summer and fall, the value can easily reach \$500 or more.	Land preparation	\$20.00
	Seeds	25.00
	Transplants	10.00
	Fertilizer	10.00
	Pesticides	10.00
	Equipment and tools	20.00
	Total annual cost	\$95.00

#### Crops for Maximum Return

To secure a maximum return from the home garden, select productive, high value vegetables. Some of the best for summer harvest are snap beans, pole beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, Swiss chard, collard, sweet corn, cucumbers, leaf lettuce, onion, sweet peppers, bush type pumpkin and squash, and tomatoes. Potatoes, and sweet potatoes may be added if space permits.

Beets, carrots, and onions should be planted in band or double rows about 5 inches wide to increase yields. Side buds may be harvested from broccoli for many weeks after the terminal bud cluster has been cut. Swiss chard may be cut repeatedly all summer, and will produce a much larger yield than spinach. Cucumbers should be grown on a vertical trellis of wire fencing or stout cord to save space. Tomatoes may be planted 15 inches apart and trained to a single stem on a 6 foot stake to increase yields, and improve quality.

As soon as the early harvest of such crops as snap beans, beets, cabbage, sweet corn, lettuce, or onions has been completed, replant with the same or other vegetables to insure a continuous supply during the late summer and fall. By careful planning, and successive planting, two crops can be harvested from half or more of the garden.

The Fall Garden

The value of the home vegetable garden may increase by at least one-third if the planting is continued during midsummer to provide continuous harvest during the fall months. Some of the best vegetables for the fall garden are snap beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collard, sweet corn, and turnips. Hardy crops like broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collard and turnips will grow for a month or more after frost has killed the tender vegetables.

The planting dates for your fall garden are easy to determine. Vegetables may be planted at any time which allows them to mature before they are killed by cold weather.

Determine the number of days required for maturity as cited in the variety list, in your seed catalog, or on the package of seeds. Plant hardy crops not later than that number of days before the average date of the first fall frost in your locality. Plant half-hardy crops the number of days to maturity plus about one week before the first expected frost. Plant tender crops the number of days to maturity plus 2 weeks before the first expected frost. The average date of the first frost in your area can be secured from the Extension agent in your county or city.

Harvesting and Storage

Some vegetable crops may be stored for several months in the unheated basement of the average home. The best for home storage are onions, and winter type pumpkins and squash.

Beets, carrots, and turnips may be left in the garden, and dug as needed during the winter. If cold weather causes the ground to freeze, cover the row with a mulch of leaves and corn stalks.

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